

Oakland Tribune

Department of Peace idea gains support in Bay Area

By Lisa Friedman - Washington

Monday, March 24, 2003 - AS THE WAR with Iraq intensified, anti-war presidential hopeful Dennis Kucinich said his dreams for a federal Department of Peace have not bombed out.

The Cleveland Democratic congressman said he plans to reintroduce in April a plan for the \$3 billion cabinet-level bureau, which he has said will counter the Department of Defense by devoting its efforts to conflict resolution, the pursuit of non-violence and international disarmament.

The Department of Peace is supported by several Bay Area Democrats: Barbara Lee of Oakland, Mike Honda of San Jose, George Miller of Martinez, Pete Stark of Fremont and Lynn Woolsey of San Rafael.

Bay Area representatives Stark and Honda picked up support last week in their conviction that the Court of Appeals in San Francisco did the right thing last year in declaring the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance unconstitutional.

Last year, Stark and Honda were two of only three lawmakers to back that court's decision. Last week five other lawmakers joined them in opposing a House resolution that urged the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse the 9th Circuit's ruling.

Wednesday's 400-7 vote declared the 9th Circuit's decision "clearly inconsistent" with the intent of the framers of the Constitution.

Representatives Miller and Zoe Lofgren, D-San Jose, voted "present," which is a method politicians sometimes use to record their opposition to an issue without actually taking a stand.

States like California that rack up the costs of incarcerating illegal criminal aliens will receive \$585 million under a bill that passed the Senate last week.

The legislation sponsored by senators Dianne Feinstein, John Kyle, R-Ariz., and John McCain, R-Ariz., restores money that President Bush scrapped for reimbursing states. Lawmakers said state and county governments spend an estimated total of \$13 billion jailing illegal immigrants arrested in connection with local crimes.

The bill still has to pass muster in the House.

The United States will pour \$15 million into a fund to fight the global HIV/AIDS crisis under legislation introduced last week by Rep. Tom Lantos, D-San Mateo.

The bill funds the pledge President Bush made in his State of the Union address. It also pledges to side step the White House ban on assisting foreign governmental organizations that provide abortion counseling or services.

The bi-partisan bill is also supported by International Relations Committee Chairman Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill.

Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Alamo has added a Web link of resources for military families to her congressional home page.

The "support center for military families" section of her Web site contains links to information about military health benefits, tax information for reservists, the Montgomery G.I. bill and other military issues.

Tauscher said her goal was to create a central place for active duty military, reservists, and members of the National Guard to get answers to questions about health care, pay and employment rights. The Web site is www.house.gov/tauscher

Nepalese textiles and apparel imports in the United States would be duty free for two years under legislation proposed last week by Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

The California lawmaker said in a statement her aim was to help one of the world's poorest countries "sustain a vital export and promote economic stability." She said Nepal "faces some serious challenges in the years ahead as it attempts to build a prosperous economy and raise its people's standard of living."

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